Upper Canada Village a living museum



Costumed craftspeople, like Marion Hart, bring Ontario's heritage to life by demonstrating how the early settler lived and worked.

Ontario's history is being taken down from the book shelves, dusted off and brought to life, thanks to the interpreters, guides and craftspeople atUpper Canada Village.

Historical museums, like Upper Canada Village (11.3 km or 7 miles east of Morrisburg, Ontario), offer visitors a rare glimpse of Canada's early ploneer period.

At the village, the plank sidewalks are lined with mid-19th-century homes, mills, shops, a tavern, church and school. Inside the buildings, antique furnishings and other valuable items are on display. Horse-drawn carriages travel the gravel roadways, teams of oxen plow the fields, and barges navigate the small channel that runs through the village.

But Upper Canada Village is more than a historical museum. For three seasons a year, the village brings Ontario history to life.

Dressed pioneer-style --

women in bonnets and long skirts, men in hats and longsleeved shirts -- the village staff of 175 explains and demonstrates how early sett-

museum's four curators, said there are certain qualiguides, interpreters and traftspeople.

history."

About 340,000 visitors from all over the world tour Upper Canada Village every year. On a busy summer day, (the village is open spring, summer and fall) as many as 6,500 visitors will pass through the gates.

lers lived and worked. Wendy Evans, one of the ties she looks for in the men and women she hires as

"I like a big smile, because that tells me the person will work well with the public, and I look for someone who is alert and interested in

So it's also important to Wendy that she selects employees who feel comfortable, confident and composed when working with large

(Canadian Government Office of Tourism Photo)

crowds. "I try to hire someone who won't get flustered when thousands of people walk past and ask the same questions over and over," she explained. "It takes someone with stamina and patience."

Once the people are hired, they're sent for training. For three days in May, they meet with veteran village employees (some have worked there 16 years) for a series of workshops, seminars, dis-

cussions and tours. They also study communications techniques to help them work more effectively with the

public. All guides, interpreters and craftspeople are wellversed in the history of Upper Canada Village and

the era if represents. Village staff are pleasant, eager to assist and helpful. Each employee is a wellspring of information, carrying a long list of facts and

details about the village. But if a visitor asks something the staff member can't answer immediately, he or she will do a little research and let the visitor know by letter.

For the past two summers, Barbara Saddler has worked as an interpreter in the oneroom school house. Sitting behind her wooden desk. equipped with quill pen, slate and school bell, Barbara explains to visitors what education was like more than a century ago.

Ontario's early school days are of particular interest to Barbara because when she's not working at Upper Canada Village, she's teaching grade school in Peterborough, Ontario.

What Barbara enjoys most about her job are the interesting questions.

"Children are curious about the length of the school day back then and the kinds of punishment naughty kids received," she explained. Adults ask most about teach-

ers' salaries".

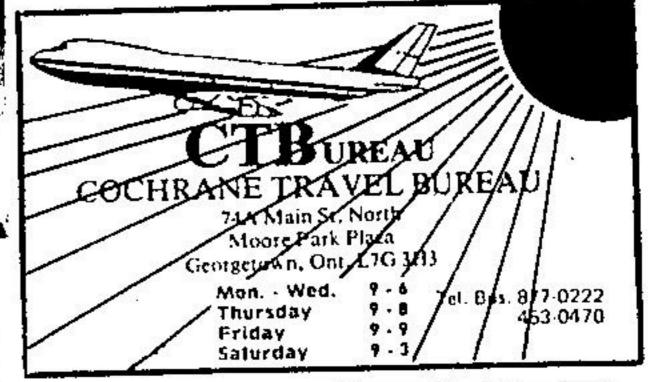
Marion Hart, a craftsperson who has been working at the village since 1961, spins, weaves and dyes wool just as early settlers did.

With spinning wheel at hand, Marion shows visitors the care and work that early Onlario residents undertook when making clothing and handerafts.

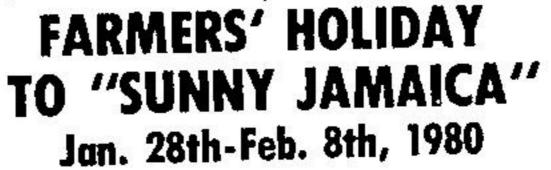
"I am lucky to be doing something I enjoy. In all the years I've been doing this, I've never found it boring. In fact. I do the same thing for a hobby at home."

Marion Hart, Barbara Saddler and the rest of the Upper Canada Village staff are reaching out a friendly , hand to visitors by inviting ..them to participate in Ontario's living history.

· · For general information about Canada's many historic museums or Canada as a travel destination conlact the Canadian Government Office of Tourism, Oltawa, Canada, KIA OH6.







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